When new fields are prepared, the first work of clearing them falls to the men. This work is done with a knife and an ax. The shape of this latter tool is the same among all the tribes: a wooden handle with a bulge at one end like a club; and a long, narrow, triangular piece of iron embedded laterally in the handle.

After clearing the brush, the men pile the rubbish at the feet of the large trunks and set it on fire. The tree, undermined at its base, finally topples over and remains where it falls.

The women take charge of the other work of cultivation. This varies [57] very little from tribe to tribe, and even the various crops of manioc, maize, peanuts, rice, bananas, and sugar cane require only quite rudimentary special labor.

Manioc is the staple food of the tribes over most of the region we visited. The native cultivates both sweet and bitter manioc. The latter variety is the more widespread. To prepare the ground, the native woman uses an iron hoe, triangular in shape,

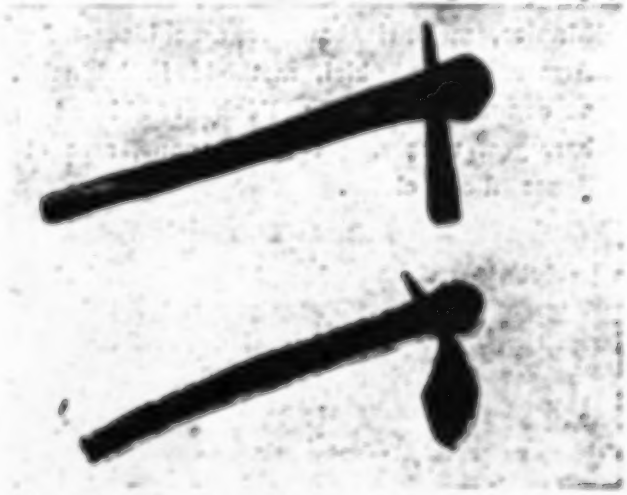

Fig. 37. Ax and Hoe from Lake Leopold II-Lukenie.

with a flaring base and a spike at the top. This piece of iron is embedded laterally in a rough-hewn wooden handle which bulges at the end like a club. The purpose of the club-like end is two-fold: it provides a better hold for the piece of iron, and it intensifies

Nkoma

paragraph beginning on page 97 and continued on page 98 is not translated.]

[98] On the whole, we note the following special ethnic characteristics.

1) Uniformity in the cultivation of manioc, the staple food of all of these peoples.

2) Undertaking the cultivation of maize under the influence

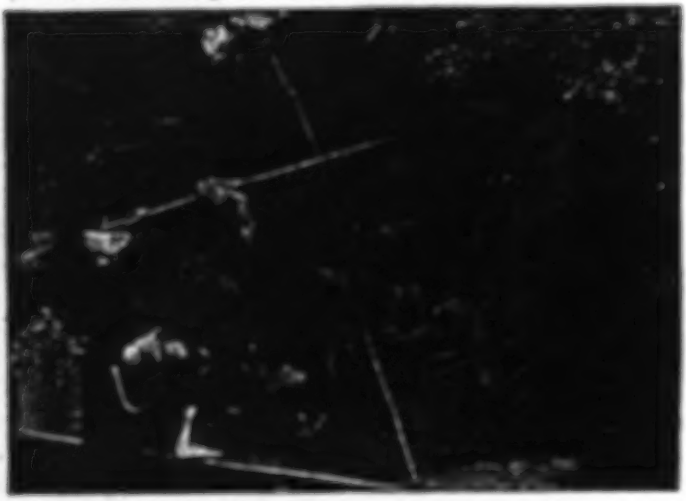

Fig. 58. *Weir* Fishing at a Dam among the Mongengere. Closing the Screens and Capturing the Trapped Fish.

of the *ephemeral* encouragement of Bula Matari [Ed., the European administration] among the peoples of the Congo-Kasai, and rice cultivation under Arab influence in the region of Bena Dibele-Kole. Contrary to what we noted concerning maize, the innovation introduced by the Arabs has become firmly implanted in the life of these natives, and the cultivation of rice will probably eliminate manioc eventually.

3) Formation of a zone of sugar-cane cultivation, the development of which is in inverse proportion to the extent of the palm groves.

4) Complete absence of animal husbandry of any importance.

5) Uniformity in the methods of communal hunting and the gradual development of attendant religious customs and practices from east to west, corresponding to a decline in hunting by individuals with traditional weapons. This fact leads us to suppose

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[825]

recollection of an animal of the leopard family which they call bokonga. Their description of it corresponds to the lion. Some soldiers and other expatriates, who were also young people, shown representations of a lion immediately identified it with their bokonga.

The groups under discussion here lived for a time on the banks of the Luwo (Maringa) and the [11] upper Ikelemba, (1) then under

[173]

1. It appears that between the Ikelemba and its tributary the Losflifa, there is still a bonkom tree called w'ămenga (of bald heads) under which, according to tradition, the ancestors held their councils. Nearby there is a bosfé whose fruits never ripen.

pressure from other Mongo tribes, they crossed the Tshuapa-Ruki. They evicted the Ekonda and settled in their present location. This exodus must have taken place a fairly long time ago; it is impossible to determine the date and difficult to make any estimates. In any case it must have occurred 150 to 200 years ago.

• 211 These peoples are primarily farmers; they grow chiefly bananas, manioc, yams, colocasia [taro], sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and various vegetables and condiments. The food crops they grow, together with what they gather and the Elaeis palm trees provide them with a continuous and abundant food supply, as long as elephants do [131] not interfere. Their domestic animals include chickens, goats, and 224 dogs. (2) Hunting is a pleasant change of activity rather than an

[177]

2. Ducks have been introduced fairly recently, but they were known long before colonial times. They came from the south. Sheep have been introduced only in the last few decades, and they are found only in a few villages on the river banks in the lowlands.

[92] THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE MONGO NEGRO

INDUSTRY

241 461 181 One might say that nature throws into the lap of the Mongo Negro everything he needs in order to exist so that he does not have to exert himself in the slightest to get it. Generally speaking, he has only to look for his food in the forest, to pick it up from the ground as it were, with the exception of his bananas, manioc roots, and moma (a yam that, if it is prepared well, reminds one of potatoes) which are cultivated by his women. Hence, it is quite natural that one finds little industry among the Mongo, and that the Mongo Negro is not prepared to put the least effort into developing or perfecting in any way that centuries-old industry which already exists.

461 181 He can eat, and that is the main thing as far as he is concerned. A lazy, inert people, effeminate to the core, each one merely living on the efforts of his many wives and female slaves, cannot have a highly developed industry.

In general, except for hunting which is undertaken primarily by the young men of the village, the Mongo Negro does not bother about anything. Eating, sleeping, looking for and listening to quarrels, carousing at gatherings with sugar-cane beer until they are picked up in a drunken state by their wives (a spectacle one also sees in civilized Europe), this is the dreary, monotonous, drowsy life of the Mongo Negro, one of the least culturally developed but at the same time one of the most highly interesting tribes of the Evenaar district if not of the whole Congo.

He loathes and despises work and is indolence personified.

461 462 Notwithstanding the extreme idleness of the Mongo [93] people, they do have some of the industry that is necessary for their existence. However, it is on a low level and not widespread. In general, the existing industries are carried on by either the men or the women, and a man will never undertake a job belonging to the women, and vice versa. The work is not done in groups or in family units; where a branch of an industry exists, it is the concern of a single person unless more workers are necessary in order to carry out the work.